2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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themselves wondered, "How it was that in former times the foals were tied and the mares milked so early." At present mares foal in the twelfth month (*mūs ustar*) and even in the first month (*balyk ȳr*), approximately in April or May. The Yakut begin to milk their mares in the first month (*balyk ȳr*). But to clear up these moot points, it should be noted that the names for two more months are known: *atyjax yya* (the month of pitchfork, i.e., of drying hay) and *balahañña kīrār yi* (the month of changing the summer dwelling for the winter house). The Yakut usually say that the first of these two months is the same as *tördünyū* (the fourth), but they are confused concerning the second month. Mr. V. M. Jonov is of the opinion that both names were inserted between the months *at yya* and *bācinyi*, instead of *tördünyū*, when the month names failed to match the corresponding season. Thus we have a thirteen month year. Jonov found that the Yakut agreed with him in this explanation.[1]

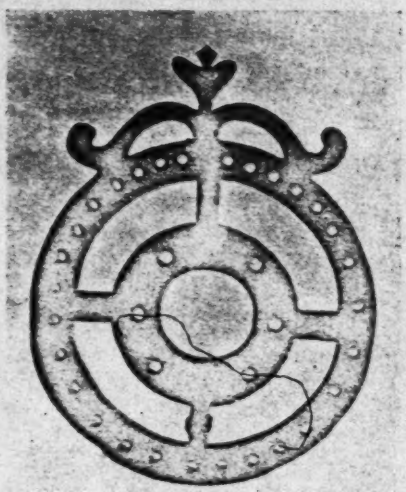

Fig. 1 (70-8818). A Calendar, the Inner Perforations represent the Days of the Week, the Outer Perforations, the Days of the Month.

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After becoming Christians the Yakut no longer followed this method of reckoning time, but oriented themselves by the Christian holidays, for instance: *kirisiāniye* (Russian, *krestcheniye*), baptism, January sixth; *Kiristiāp* (Russian, *Kristov*), Easter: *Orosuospa* (Russian *Rozhdestvo*), Christmas; *bulāstar* (Russian, *Vlasii*), or *ynax tañarata* (cow's holiday), February eleventh. Russians regard Saint Vlasii as the protector of domestic cattle and among the Yakut this saint replaced the female deity, Ayisit, of their old mythology. Among the Yakut are experienced individuals who know the number of days between holidays since it is easier to deal with immovable feasts. For movable festivals, they must often consult their priest. On the wall of every Yakut dwelling is a calendar, usually consisting of a small board with holes corresponding to the number of days in the year.

[1] Jonov, V. M., L'Aigle dans les Croyances Yakoutes (*Publications du Musée d'Anthropologie et d'Ethnographie de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*, vol. 1, pt. 2, no. XVI, pp. 1-28, St.-Pétersbourg, 1913 [In Russian]), 22-23.

2; Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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The immovable feasts are marked by crosses over the holes. A wooden peg is placed in the hole to indicate the current date, thus showing whether it is an ordinary day or a holiday. Fig. 1 shows a circular calendar; the inner circle has seven perforations, corresponding to the seven days of the week. A peg is shown in the hole for Sunday, over which there is a cross. The outer ring has thirty holes. When the month has thirty-one days, the peg is kept in the last hole for two days. If the month has twenty-nine or twenty-eight days, the peg must be transferred to the first day of the next month. The calendar is called *kün ahar*, it counts the days, or *sibaska* (Russian, *svyatzy*, calendar of saints), or *nädiälä asarar mas*, board which shows the week.

The Yakut began to count the month by weeks only after Russianization. Thus, for week, they use the Russian word *nädiälä* (*nedielya*). The days of the week are also known by Russian names:—

Sunday, *tañara künä* (festival day), *boskyrsyanya* (Russian, *voskresenye*), or *nädiälä öjüa* (the dividing day of the week)
Monday, *bädäliänik* (Russian, *ponedelnik*)
Tuesday, *otuornyuk* or *oltuorunyuk* (Russian, *vtornik*)
Wednesday, *čärädä* (Russian, *sereda*)
Thursday, *cäppiär* (Russian, *chetverg*)
Friday, *pätiñsä* or *bätiñsä* (Russian, *pyatnitza*)
Saturday, *subätä* (Russian, *subbota*)

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

THE KUMISS FESTIVALS[1]

During my leadership of the Siberian Division of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, I was engaged in the investigation of the Koryak and Yukaghir. The results of this investigation were published in two comprehensive volumes. I went to the Yukaghir from the Koryak country across the Stanovoi Mountain Ridge, and my return route to Europe and America lay through the territory of the Yakut and the whole of Siberia. 114

The years 1888–97 were spent among the Yakut as a political exile. During the two last years of that period I was a member of the Yakut Expedition of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Professor Boas, the organizer of the Jesup Expedition, wished to take advantage of my knowledge of the Yakut country and tribe and to acquire Yakut ethnological collections for the Museum. An extensive collection was gathered. Most European museums, even those of Russia, have at present only insignificant collections from this interesting tribe, the ancient culture of which is disappearing under the influence of climate, Russian contact, and other factors.

The large ornamented wooden kumiss goblets described below are not easily obtained at present. The conical birchbark summer dwelling is no longer used. However, the Yakut, though now living in the extreme northeast of Siberia, are typical representatives of the culture of the nomadic or semi-nomadic horse and cattle-breeding Turkic tribes of Central Asia. They have preserved one of the oldest Turkic dialects. They introduced silver, iron, and copper work, fashion in costume ornamentation, dualistic religious ideas, and the poetical folklore of the Tataric peoples of Western Asia. In their old habitat they were principally horse-breeders, but in their present abode they increased the number of their horned cattle to the detriment of their herds of horses and cow's milk became a substitute for mare's milk, from which kumiss is made. Finally, the cultivation of cereal plants, a trait borrowed from the Russians, in the southern and middle parts of Yakutsk Province, has so progressed in the last thirty years, that agriculture is now the chief occupation and bread the staple food of many Yakut of Yakutsk District, particularly of Olekminsk. Nowadays droves of horses and mares for milking, are found only in localities far removed from the centers of Russian influence, and these belong to a few very rich families. 178 796

[1] Jochelson, Koryak, and Yukaghir, and especially, Kumiss Festivals of the Yakut and the Decoration of Kumiss Vessels (*Boas Anniversary Volume*, pp. 257–271, New York, 1906) where an account of these ceremonies and their paraphernalia was first published.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

With the passing of the production of kumiss, the ancient ornamented kumiss vessels and goblets, as well as the customs, festivals, and ceremonials associated with its production and use are also disappearing.

I was fortunate enough not only to collect a great number of ancient kumiss vessels in various remote localities, but also to arrange a kumiss festival not far from Yakutsk. However, before proceeding with the description of the festival I witnessed, it may be of interest to present one version of its origin.[1]

Long ago, Onogoi-bai, a Tatar of the Sakha tribe, settled on the Lena River. He came thither with his wife, Sara, his brother, Ulūkhoso, and his men servants, thirteen men altogether. He possessed numerous cattle and horses and nomadized on the left bank of the Lena, on a plain he called Saisary. While living on Saisary Lake, a son, Ān-Taibȳr, and two daughters, Ān-Tshyngai and Nyukā-Kharakhsyn were born to them. Later, a strong and alert youth named Elliei came to him. He was an excellent hunter; roamed through the mountain forests like a wolf, lead bears in by his hand, and dashed through the water like a pike. He entered the service of Onogoi, lived with him three years, and gained the love and respect of all the family.

Once Sara said to her husband: "Er-Elliei is such a clever man, he may be better qualified to become our son-in-law than to remain a worker." Onogoi answered indignantly, "I shall not give my daughter to a stranger. Apparently you like him yourself." Sara replied, "I know you fear Elliei and that he is happier than you are. You tremble when you see him. If you want to convince yourself that what I say is true, stretch a white horsehide through the middle of our birchbark tent, fasten it to the ground with pegs, sit down on it, and with a goblet filled to the brim with kumiss in your hand, call for Elliei." Onogoi did as his wife advised him. When Elliei entered, Onogoi's hand trembled so that he spilled half the contents of the goblet.

When Onogoi convinced himself of Elliei's power, he said to him, "Friend, you have served me faithfully as a relative for more than three years, now I wish to compensate you. My good horse and valuable furs are not sufficient reward for you. You have no woman friend; choose that one of my daughters who pleases you." Elliei thanked him for his kindness and asked for time to consider the matter. Ān-Tchȳngai, Onogoi's elder daughter was rather ugly, while the younger, Nyuka-Kharakhsyn, was handsome and the father's darling.

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[1]Recorded by Priklonsky and translated into German by Radloff, *ibid.*, 74-77, and re-translated into English by the author.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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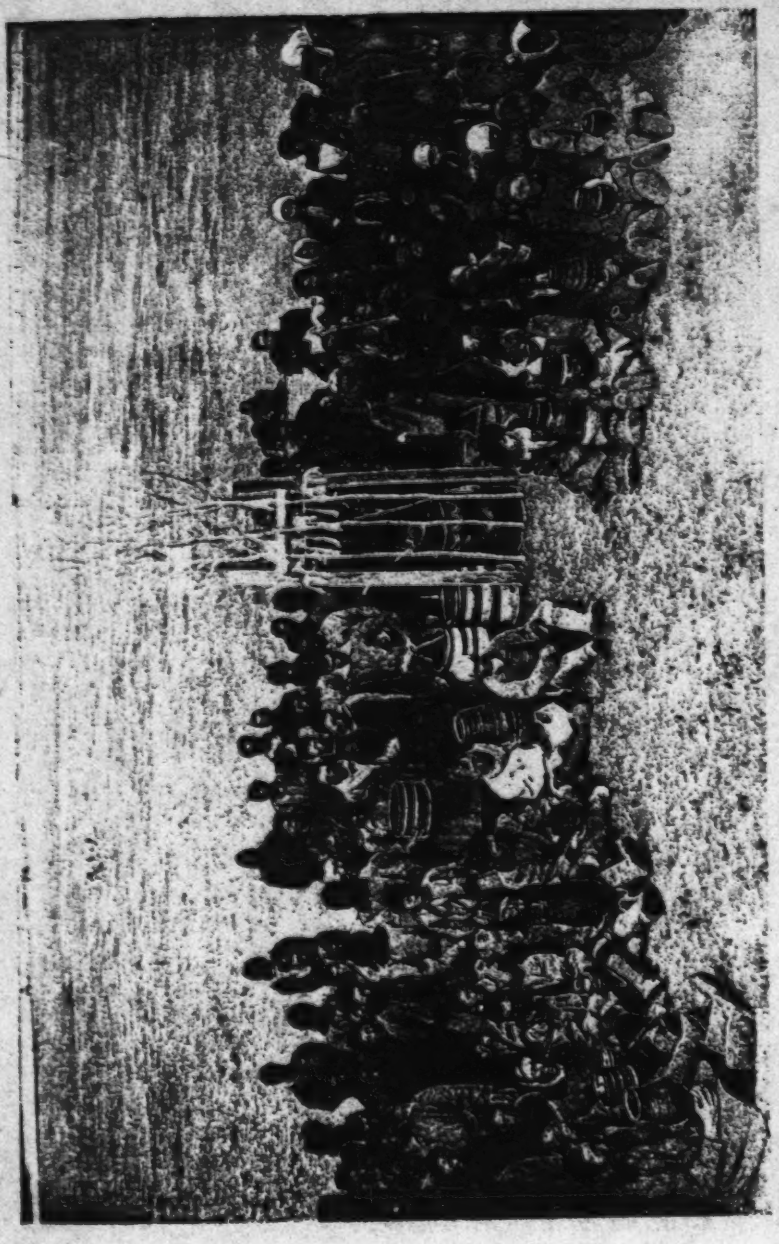

Fig. 87. Kumiss Festival.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

539 Onogoi, as the chief, was given the first goblet. When he took it, he fell to the ground, unconscious and sightless, with stiffened limbs. The people believed it to be a message from the gods because Onogoi had damned Er-Elliei and mutilated the cattle created by god.

Shortly after Onogoi died and all his riches vanished. His only son became poor and subsisted on the booty of his black dog.

The Yakut living in different districts originated from emigrants of the Yakut district, who partly voluntarily and partly forced by powerful tribes, settled the distant region.

After the death of Er-Elliei the kumiss festival was celebrated in the same manner in all the *uluses*.

● 776 782 756 [614] The kumiss festival (*ysyax*) has both social and religious significance. During the summer, in olden times, every rich man arranged a kumiss festival at which all members of the clan assembled and were entertained. Other people, and frequently whole clans, were also invited. During the festival defensive and offensive leagues were concluded. Every such ceremony was initiated with sacrifices, which were accompanied with songs, dances, games, horse and foot races, and other contests.

Two kumiss festivals in honor of the deities were arranged during the year by the owners of large droves of mares. The spring festival was consecrated to the Supreme Being and the head of the benevolent deities of the class of "creators" (*ayi*),—to Lord-Bright-Creator. The first milking of mares in the spring is also consecrated to the Supreme Being. The spring festival is called *Ayi ysyaxa* (kumiss festival in honor of the "creators"). Spring, as the period of the revival of nature, was the season of happiness and abundance. In the prayers addressed to the "creators" they are implored to bestow their blessing upon the people. The spring kumiss festival takes place in the open air. In the midst of a large smooth grass meadow is erected a kind of altar, consisting of two posts with a cross beam and three young birch trees with young shoots on them (see p. 201). The altar is hung with sacrificial horsehair; on the ground in front of it are placed ornamented birchbark and oxhide barrels filled with kumiss. The skin barrels are tied to the altar-frame by long ornamented strips of soft elk leather, so that the vessels will not collapse when softened by the liquid in them.

The ceremony commences with sacrifices to Lord-Bright-Creator and to other "creators." Their names are uttered by the steward of the festival, who may be a shaman or an older member of the clan. The sacrifices consist of libations of kumiss to every deity, in the direction of the dawn; formerly horses were often consecrated by being driven to the

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

east, the seat of the "creators." Blood sacrifices were made only to evil deities and not to the "creators." In front of the altar stood the steward with the owner of the drove and his wife on either side of him. All three faced east where dwell the benevolent deities. In a row on the right side of the altar stood nine innocent youths and on the left nine virgins with goblets filled with kumiss consecrated to the benevolent deities. The participants were clad in splendid festival attire, trimmed with valuable fur, silver pendants, and other decorations.

The steward addressed a prayer to the "creators," begging for blessings: increase of horses and cattle, a good harvest of hay, good health for the people and animals, and an abundance of food. Then he took the kumiss festival ladle (*ysyax xamyyaha*) and made a libation, in the direction of the dawn, to the benevolent deities. Then, while making a libation to the ground, he addressed the local deity, "the owner of the place" (*ăn doidu iccitä*), asking him not to harm the inhabitants of the spot and the members of the clan. After that, the steward, with the help of the sacrificial ladle, proceeded to prophesy. He threw the ladle towards the sky, and if it fell with the bowl part upwards, it portended the granting of future abundance by the deities and all the people uttered the joyful, cry, *Uru!*

Then, according to the directions of the steward, the boys and girls gave the goblets of sacrificial kumiss to the elder and honored members of the clan, both male and female, who placed themselves to the right and left of the altar, drank from the goblets and passed them on to the less important and the younger people. Behind every honored or aged member of the clan, sat or stood his domestics, less esteemed relatives, young men, and laborers, whose welfare was his responsibility. When the goblet was emptied, it was returned to the steward or host to be filled.

At the same time, not far from the altar, other stewards were preparing tables, or simply boards on the ground, on which were placed piles of horse and cow meat and dishes of melted butter. Every chief of a family or clan received a large portion of meat and butter, which he divided among his people.

The whole day passed with songs, round dances, games, races and other contests, and shamanistic performances. The poetical choral songs of the young men and girls, in praise of the spring and love, were very interesting. Middendorff[1] and Sieroszevski[2] recorded some of these songs. During the kumiss festival the change from winter to spring was

[1]Middendorff, *ibid.*, Part 2, 1578.
[2]Sieroszevski, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, 557 et seq.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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Fig. 88. Circle Dance, a Part of the Kumiss Festival.

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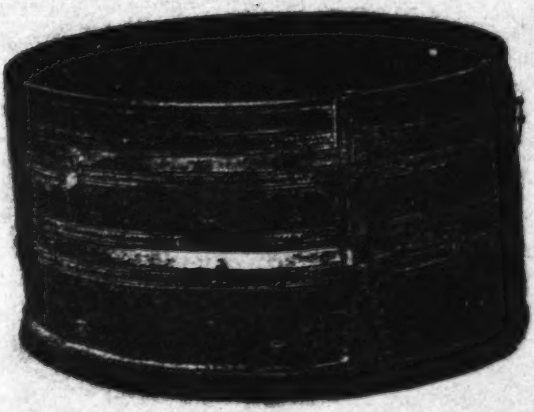


Fig. 89 (70-8613). Cylindrical Wooden Vessel used in the Kumiss Festival.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

dramatized in a contest between two men. One, dressed in white, represented spring, and was called "son of creator" (*ayi uola*); the other, clad in black, represented winter, and was called "son of evil spirit" (*abasy uola*).

The autumnal festival was celebrated in honor of the destructive forces and was therefore called *abasy-ysyax*. It was dedicated to the evil spirits (*abasylar*), the inhabitants of the west and the representatives of darkness and night, in order that they may not interfere with them in winter, when starvation, disease, and death are imminent. This festival also took place in the open air, but at night.

The first night, the ceremony was in honor of Big-Lord (*Ulu-Toyon*) and the evil spirits of the upper world subordinate to him. The ceremony of the second night was in honor of *Axsan Duolai* and his subordinates, the evil spirits of the lower world. To all of these evil spirits, in addition to the libations of kumiss made to the benevolent deities, blood sacrifices of cattle and horses were also made. This ceremony was superintended by nine male and nine female shamans.

Kumiss Vessels and their Decorations

Kumiss vessels may be divided into three types, according to form:—

1. The *corōn*, a very large urn-shaped goblet with a small base holding from ten to fifteen liters of kumiss. Their small bases make them unstable. To drink from them, they must be held with both hands. Three large goblets of varying sizes are reproduced in Fig. 91. Two of them, in addition to the engraved decorations, are ornamented with silver hoops and pendants and one with pendants of red cloth and hair from a horse's mane.

2. *Us ataxtāx corōn*, i.e., tripod goblets of smaller size are illustrated in Fig. 90. Fig. 90*a* is ornamented with silver rings.

3. Cylindrical vessels with set-in bottoms of varying sizes, and named according to their size, the small one, *mācax:* and the large ones, *ymyja*.

All these drinking vessels are made from the strong, tough wood of the polar birch tree. The first two types are carved and hollowed from one piece. Formerly the adze was the implement used for hollowing but recently a chisel. The finish, polish, and decoration are accomplished with knives only. The sides of these goblets are made very thin and they easily crack when drying. A goblet left empty in the sun for a single day is sure to crack. To guard against injury, they are kept in a dark, damp place, and are also freely oiled with melted butter, which gives them a

6: Sauer--116-117 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 231, 415, 273, 796

"Their holidays commence with the month of June, and last about 15 days. The mares having cast, a short time is allowed the colts to suck, that they may acquire strength; they are then tied up, or pent in coops about the hut, to prevent their sucking at will; which is only allowed twice a day, when the mares are milked. The milk is collected in symirs, or large leather buckets formed like a bottle, wide at bottom, and narrow at the top, each [117] containing about an anker; into this a small piece of the stomach of a calf or colt is thrown, and some water mixed with it. It is then kept in constant agitation by a broad-ended stick, until it ferments, and acquires an agreeable acidity, which is very nourishing; and if taken in great quantities, it has an intoxicating quality. Of this drink, which they call koumis, every one collects as much as he can; and some of the chiefs obtain more than 500 ankers of it. A day is then fixed upon by each chief to consecrate his stock, which is performed as follows: [RCH: see category 116, pp. 117-119]."

6: Sauer--117 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 342, 554, 574, 756, 796

"A summer hut is built of thin poles of a conical form, covered with the inner bark of birch, on some extensive meadow. It is ornamented inside and out with branches of the birch-tree, and a hearth is made in the centre. Relations and acquaintances are invited to the banquet; but all guests are welcome of every nation indiscriminately. The magicians take the head seats; others are seated according to the estimation of their seniority. (1)

1. Years do not secure the title of senior, (Oghonior,) which is the greatest term of respect that the Socha know. Magicians have it, and all such as are capable of advising the proper means to be adopted to secure success to such public and private concerns as are virtuous and good."

6: Sauer--117-118 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-1-2
116, 756, 782, 796, 823

"When the hut is full, the elder shaman rises, and commands one of the Socha that he knows to be qualified (namely, that has not seen a corpse within the month, and that has never been accused of theft, or bearing false witness against any body, which defiles them for ever, and renders them unqualified for this sacred and solemn task) to take a large goblet, called a tshoron, which is used to drink out of on solemn occasions, and fill it with koumis out of the first symir; then to place himself before the hearth, with his face to the east, holding the tshoron to his breast about [118] two minutes. He then pours koumis three times on the hot embers, as an offering to Aar Toyon. Turning a very little to the right, he pours three times to Kubey Chatoon; then to the south he offers in the same manner to each of the benevolent gods. With his face to the west, he pours three times to the 27 tribes of aërial spirits; and three times to the north to the eight tribes of the pit, and to the manes of their departed sorcerers. After a short pause, he concludes his libation by an offering to Enachsys the cowherdess. The sorcerer then turns the man with his face to the east, and commences a prayer aloud, thanking the godhead for all favours received, and soliciting a continuance of their bounty. On concluding his prayer, he takes off his cap, with which he fans himself three times, and cries out aloud, 'Oorui!' (grant) which is repeated by all present. The elder shaman then, taking the tshoron, drinks a little, and hands it to his brethren of the same order; from whom it passes to the company as they sit, except such as are

6: Sauer--117-118 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-2
116, 756, 782, 796, 823

defiled. Women are not admitted into the hut; nor are they, or the disqualified, allowed any of the koumis out of the first symir, which they call sanctified, as possessing the power of purifying and strengthening in a divine sense."

6: Sauer--118-119 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 273, 796, 526, 562, 555

"[RCH: in the koumis festival] They all now go out of the hut, and seat themselves on the strewed branches of birch, in half circles fronting the east. All the symirs [RCH: leather buckets] are carried out, and placed between the branches of trees stuck in the earth, and they commence drinking; every crescent having their symirs, tshoron, [RCH: large goblets] and presiding shaman, who fills the goblet, and pushes it about with the course of the sun. The quantity that they drink is incredible. Tournaments now begin, wrestling, running, leaping, &c.; and if any one carry off the prize in all the achievements, he is esteemed as particularly favoured by the deities, and receives more respect and [119] credit in his testimony than falls to the lot of a common man. When the ceremony is finished, they mount their horses, forming half circles, drink a parting draught, and, wheeling round with the sun's course, ride home. Women attend, and form parties among themselves at some distance from the men, where they drink, dance, &c."

7: Shklovsky --186 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 788, 796

"On the fifteenth day of our journey we reached Indigirka. In a lonely hut, waiting for our deer to rest, we spent our Christmas. The Yakut women put on over their ordinary leather tunics a long robe of gaily-coloured cotton material, then brought armfuls of hay and strewed it on the floor. A stump of wax-candle was put in the place of honour in the corner and on a piece of smoke-begrimed paper was a roughly-made wooden cross. All the people, adults and children, stood in a row before the cross. An old man crossed himself and stood motionless, and all the rest followed his example. Again the old man crossed himself and said 'Christos' ' The others repeated the word, and this is the only prayer which the savages know. After standing still for a time the old man blew out the candle, the savages shook hands with each other, and the banquet began. The hostess cooked several hares and partridges."

7: Shklovsky -- 198-199 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 114, 273, 796

"I venture to quote from the bibliographical rarity 'Reisen' (page 172, vol. ii.), by Gmelin, of whose impartiality and honesty all polar explorers hold so high an opinion!

'All the holidays are devoted more to the devil than to God. Drunkenness and licentious behaviour give a very bad example to the numerous heathen, who see the greatest pleasure of the inhabitants that consists in drunkenness; and not the drunkenness confined to one occasion, one evening, for example, for the drunkenness that infects all the people at these times is such that no astrologer could find even one happy hour when they are sober, for to them all hours are the same. On Christmas Day a kind of infection seizes the people, like a fever, from which on the second or third day all become quite mad. The illness culminates on the fourteenth day in a general madness, which does not end for five or six weeks. During the week before Lent they are seized with a fresh paroxysm, from which they recover in eight days. In spring, at Easter time, this madness returns, with the difference that, owing to Lent, the attack is shorter but fiercer and ends on the seventh day. Like convalescents who are just recovering from a serious illness, the people only very gradually resume their normal life--that is to say, they are drunk for only four days in the week. Sometimes the madness returns with double strength, and then they are drunk for eight days at a time. I consider that drunkenness is a disease which, like epilepsy, ends only with death.' [199]

Such a statement of the habits of the Yakuts is given by Gmelin."

7: Shklovsky -- 202-203 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut-1-2
116, 796, 536

"There was unusual excitement in Yakutsk about an affair which had happened a few days previously. It was customary, at Christmas time, throughout the holiday, for all classes to go out in masquerade. Singing and playing on musical instruments, they went in groups from one house to another, and at each house where the inmates were willing to receive the masqueraders a lantern was hung out. All the big officials consider it their duty to receive them, but on this occasion some unpleasantness had occurred. The Vice-Governor gave a kind welcome to the masqueraders, and they began to perform a little 'play,' in which different official institutions were represented, the local police, the court, the Treasury, etc. One masquerader wore the uniform of a general, and the others addressed him in verse, petitioning for various reforms. Their requests were modest, and were wittily expressed, and the Vice- [203] Governor applauded the masqueraders and touched glasses with them. They next went to the house of another official, again they performed their little show, were well received, thanked and their health drunk. And so on to a third and a fourth house, by which time the masqueraders began to show signs of the frequent health drinkings. Their tongues were loosened, and they added new couplets to the verses. The masquerader representing the general began to talk, and then to make speeches in parody of the speeches of a local official. It was quite an excitement. Next day search was made for the 'general,' and rumour said he was to be exiled to Kolymsk. None of the masqueraders could be found anywhere; however, at last they presented themselves to apologise for their freak. They

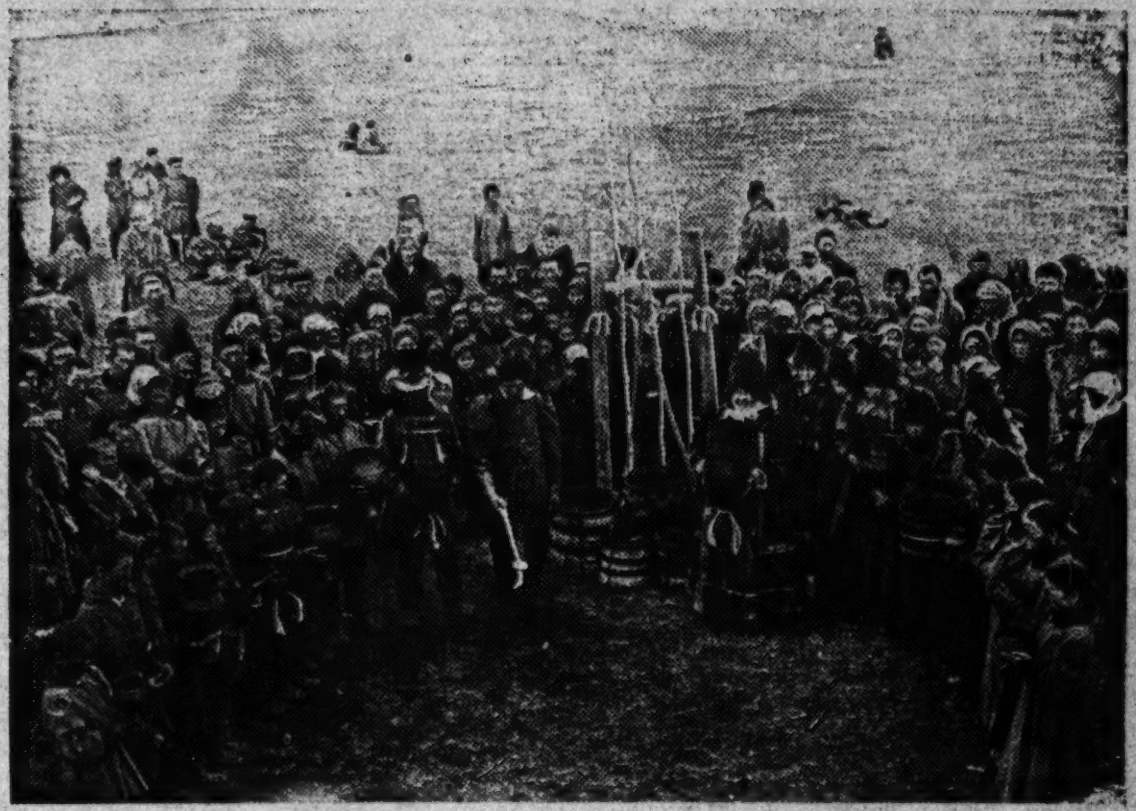
were all young local officials and teachers. The punishment was not very serious; they were placed under arrest only for a few days."

17: Erman--299-300 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut
116, 234, 273, 796

"In June and July, when the mares foal, the Yakuts show themselves as skilful as the Bashkirs, Buraets, and other Siberian tribes, in the art of setting mare's milk into the vinous fermentation. They then celebrate a religious thanksgiving and festival, at which the men empty off, at a single draught, immense wooden goblets of these intocicating drinks. The women are, on these occasions, obliged to content themselves with the intoxication of tobacco fumes. There are some, also, who distil the sour milk, as is done by the Buraets, in an iron kettle; which, in order to collect the vapours driven off, is covered with a board, and provided with a wooden tube passing under water. The Yakutian name, aruigui, designates both this national spirit and [300] Russian brandy. Another oily kind of drink, made of milk, is used in winter; the Yakuts call it arui, but the Russians, in plain terms, melted Yakutian butter; and this, too, is capable of intoxicating if it be taken in sufficient quantity. Besides these, all kinds of fish and animals of the forest are eaten by the Yakuts, without scruple, and without much delicacy of selection. The branch of this nation which is cut off from the rest, near the shores of the Icy Sea, are able to conform to necessity, and to subsist entirely on this kind of food for the keeping of reindeer, which enriches the Tunguzes in that quarter, has never succeeded with the Yakuts."

19: Kharuzin --40-41 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 554, 585, 614, 627, 796

The oldest kinsman in the clan, or the īye-ūsa, is always heaped with honors, if he is both rich and has never been put on trial. To him pertains the jurisdiction in trifling quarrels between kinsfolk. The following ceremonies serve to recall the religious functions that he (Ysekh) formerly exercised a. At the time of the spring festival, which bears a strictly clan character, they bring to him, first of all, a large wooden vessel (Choron) containing kumiss; he pronounces a prayer of thanks to the gods and then pours the kumiss upon the fire. b. At the time of the arrival of the betrothed at the bridegroom's yurt, they take from the sleigh of the betrothed, and place upon a table in front of the fire place the boiled head of a horse, whose eyes are covered with butter, to whose ears are attached intestines filled with horse's blood, and a wooden cup filled with butter. After this the betrothed enters the yurt, and stands, having first untied her girdle, on the right side of the komelok [RCH: i. e., the fireplace] where she is met by the oldest kinsman, whose place is sometimes taken nowadays by the most honored guest, who, kneeling, throws into the fire [41] pieces of meat, blood and butter, and blesses the bride. For the completion of this ceremony, whose obvious object is to unite the bride with the bridegroom's home, the oldest kinsman secures for his use the head, blood and butter brought into the yurt, and in addition the sum of one ruble.



KUMISS FESTIVAL OF THE YAKUT (SEE PP. 263, 264.)
(From photo taken by the author.)

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut
facing p. 257
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39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

825 the skull of a horse, he picks it up and hangs it on a tree. Even the excrement of the horse is not regarded as unclean.

796 273 The most important festival among the Yakut is connected with the preparation and use of kumiss, and is called *ysyax*, or kumiss festival. It has both a social and a religious significance. During the summer, in olden times, every rich man arranged a kumiss festival, at which all members of the clan assembled and were entertained. Other people, and frequently whole clans, were invited; and during the festival, defensive and offensive leagues were concluded. Every such festival commenced with sacrifices, and was accompanied with songs, dances, games, horse and foot races, and other contests.

Two kumiss festivals in honor of deities are arranged during the year by the owners of large droves of mares. One of them, in the spring, is consecrated to the Supreme Being and the head of the benevolent deities of the "creators" (*ayy*),—to Lord Bright-Creator. The first milking of mares in the spring is also consecrated to the Supreme Being. The spring festival is called *Ayy ysyaxa* ("kumiss festival in honor of the 'creators'"). Spring, as the period of the revival of nature, appears as the season of happiness and abundance. In the prayers addressed to the "creators," they are implored to bestow their blessing upon the people.

The spring kumiss festival takes place in the open air. In the midst of a large smooth grass meadow a kind of altar is erected. This consists of two posts with a crossbeam, and three young birch-trees with young shoots on them (see Plate XVII). The altar is hung round with sacrificial horsehair, and on the ground in front of it are placed ornamented birch-bark and ox-hide barrels filled with kumiss. The skin barrels are tied to the altar-frame by long ornamented straps of soft elk-leather. This is done so that the vessels, when softened by the liquid in them, shall not collapse. The ceremony commences by sacrifices to Lord Bright-Creator and to other "creators." Their names are uttered by the steward of the festival, who may be a shaman or an elder member of the clan. The sacrifices consist of libations of kumiss, in the direction of the dawn, to every

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

facing P. 264

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YAKUT GIRL IN FESTIVE ATTIRE.
(From photograph taken by the author.)

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

796 deity; and formerly horses were often consecrated by being
273 driven to the east.[1]

The plate just referred to represents one act in a spring festival.[2] In front of the altar stands the steward, having on one side of him the owner of the drove, and on the other the latter's wife. All three face to the east side of the sky, where the benevolent deities have their abode. On the right side of the altar stand nine innocent youths in a row, and on the left a row of nine pure maidens, with goblets filled with kumiss consecrated
[292] to the benevolent deities. The splendid festival attire worn on this occasion by a Yakut girl is shown in Plate XX, which represents both back and front views. The trimming consists of valuable fur, silver pendants, and other decorations.

The steward addresses a prayer to the "creators," begging for blessings,—increase of horses and cattle, a good harvest of hay, good health for the people and animals, and an abundance of food. Then he takes the kumiss-festival ladle (*ysyax xəwyyaha*), and makes a libation, in the direction of the dawn, to the benevolent deities (see Plate XVII). Then, while making a libation to the ground, he addresses the local deity, "the owner of the place" (*ăn doidu icciță*), asking him not to harm
[787] the inhabitants of the spot and the members of the clan. After that, the steward, with the help of the sacrificial ladle, proceeds to divine. He throws the ladle towards the sky: and if it falls with the front part upwards, it portends the granting by the deities of future abundance; and all the people utter the joyful cry *Uru!*

Then the boys and girls give the goblets with the sacrificial kumiss, according to the directions of the steward, to the elder and honored members of the clan, both male and female. These, after placing themselves,—the men on the right and the women on the left of the altar,—drink off the kumiss from
[782]

[1] Bloody sacrifices are given only to evil deities, and not to the "creators" (see Jochelson, The Koryak, l. c., p. 92).

[2] The festival above mentioned was arranged specially for my benefit; and most of the people, not having ancient dresses, are not clothed in festival attire, as they would have been in olden times. Neither have they enough kumiss-goblets. Most of the goblets to be seen in the photograph were lent by me from the specimens I had acquired in other localities for the collection. This festival took place within two hundred miles of the town of Yakutsk, to the east.

1. [The Spring Kumiss festival—Analyst]

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

chansky,[1] is superintended by nine male and nine female shamans.

The kumiss vessels may be divided into three types, according to their shape:—

1. The *corōn*, an urn-shaped goblet (Plate XXI) with a small foot. These goblets are usually of a very large size, and hold from ten to fifteen litres of kumiss. Their small bases make them unstable. In drinking from them, they are held with both hands.

2. Three-legged goblets, of smaller size (Plate XXII, Fig. 2), called *ūs ataxtāx corōn*.

3. Cylindrical vessels with let-in bottoms, of varying sizes, and named according to their size,—the small ones, *mārcax;* and the large ones, *ymyya* (Plate XXII, Figs. 1, 3).

All these drinking-vessels are made from the strong, tough wood of the polar birch-tree. The first two types are carved and hollowed from one piece. Formerly the hollowing-out was done with an adze, but later with the help of a chisel. The finish, polish, and decorative work are done with knives only. The sides of these goblets are made very thin, and they easily crack on drying. A goblet left empty in the sun for a single day is sure to crack. To guard against injury, they are kept in a dark, damp place, and are, besides, freely oiled with melted butter. The oiling causes the goblets to take on the appearance of dark-brown polished vessels. For the same reason, the large kumiss ladles are also oiled (see Plate XVIII, Fig. 2).

The decorative patterns on these vessels are possibly as old as the religion with which the vessels are connected. On them we do not find any Central-Asiatic or Chinese decorative motives of the more advanced periods of Asiatic culture; but we do find such decorative motives—consisting of complicated curves, spirals, coils, conventionalized plants and animals—on the clothing, saddles, and silverware of the Yakut. The ornaments on the kumiss vessels consist almost exclusively of geometrical figures, which, judging by their native names, repre-

[1] In one of the Yakut legends recorded by Khudyakoff it is related, that, at a festival in celebration of a marriage, there were present nine male and eight female shamans.

45: Lesseps-- 305 T-2 (1788) 1790 Yakut
116, 756, 796

" I very much regret the not having been present at their festival in the month of May, in celebration of the return of spring. They assemble in the open country , where they roast oxen and horses; and being supplied with an abundance of fermented koumouiss, they eat and drink to satiety, dancing and singing at intervals, and concluding at last with necromancies. Their chamans preside in these festivals, and deal out their extravagant predictions."

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

326 The same kind of superstitious awe with which the shamans were
756 regarded was also applied to the smiths, particularly hereditary smiths who were believed to have mysterious powers. The smith was considered to some extent related to the shaman. "The smith and the shaman are out of one nest." Smiths could treat illnesses, give advice and even make prophecies. The smith forged iron pendants for the shaman's costume, and this fact alone made him awesome. The smith had special power over the spirits for, according to Yakut superstition, spirits were afraid of the sound of iron and the noise of the smith's bellows.

776 Apart from shamanism, the Yakuts had another cult, connected with
782 their livelihood. The chief deity in this cult was Bay-Bayanay, the spirit of the forest and patron of hunting and fishing. According to some beliefs, Bayanay had 11 brothers. They brought luck in hunting and fishing, so that the hunter exorted them to help him before he went out hunting, and after a successful hunt made them offerings of some of the catch by throwing pieces of fat into the fire or smearing the images of Bayanay with blood.

776 The belief in ichchi or "masters" of different objects was evidently connected with hunting and fishing. The Yakuts believed that all animals, trees, and different phenomena of nature possessed ichchi, just as certain domestic articles, such as knives and axes. The ichchi themselves were neither good nor evil. In order to placate the "masters" of the mountains, cliffs, rivers, forests and so on, at various places—river crossings, mountain passes and so on—the Yakuts left small offerings of pieces of meat, butter and other food, and also scraps of cloth. The worship of
776 certain animals came close to this cult as well. The bear was an object
825 of great reverence and as a result people avoided calling it by name, were afraid of killing it, and considered it to be a transformed sorcerer. The eagle was also worshipped and called toyon kyyl ("mister beast"), and so were the raven, hawk and certain other birds and animals.

776 All these beliefs go back to the ancient means of livelihood of the Yakuts, and pastoralism also gave rise to its own set of beliefs and rituals. These comprised the cult of the deities of fertility, which was not preserved for very long and is therefore less known. Among these beliefs was clearly the belief in ayyy, benevolent deities who bestowed various benefits. It was thought the ayyy lived in the east.

First place among the benevolent spirits was taken by Urun-Ayyy-Toyon ("white lord and creator"), who lived in the eighth heaven, was kind and did not interfere in human affairs, hence there was apparently no cult of him. The image of this spirit was very much mixed up with features of the Christian God. According to a certain belief, still higher than Ayyy-Toyon was Aar-Toyon, who inhabited the ninth heaven. Below them followed a large number of other benevolent deities, who were supposed to bestow various blessings. The most important figure among them
[844] was the female deity *Aäuuhum* (Ayyysyt), who bestowed fertility, patronized women in labor and gave mothers their children. Sacrifices were made to Ayyysyt during childbirth, and since it was considered that after the birth this goddess remained three days in the house, a special female ritual (to which men were not allowed to come) was performed at the end of three days in order to celebrate her departure.

796 The chief ceremony in honor of the benevolent deities, the patrons of fertility, was the kumys festival, *ыһыах*, in the old days. This festival was organized in the spring or halfway through the summer, when there was plenty of milk; it was held in the open air, in the meadows, and many people gathered together for it. The peak moment of the festival

53: Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

was a ceremonial libation of kumys in honor of the deities, prayers to them, the ceremonial drinking of the kumys from very large wooden goblets (choroon). After this there was feasting, games of various kinds, wrestling and so on. The attendants of the benevolent deities, the so-called ayyy-oyuuna ("white shamans"), were the masters of ceremonies at the festivities, although they died out among the Yakuts a long time ago, on account of the decline of this cult. By the end of the 19th century, there remained only legends of the white shamans.

In the cult of both the benevolent and malevolent deities, a part was played at one stage by the military aristocracy—the toyons; they were usually the organizers. In their legendary genealogies the toyons often derived their names from the great and powerful deities.

The ancient ysyakh retained elements of the clan cult, and according to legend they had been organized according to clan in former times. The Yakuts retained other survivals of the clan cult, but these were not very clearly marked. For example, they retained elements of totemism, pointed out in the literature of the 18th century (Stralenberg). Each clan had at one time its own patron in the form of an animal; the clan totems were, for example, ravens, swans, falcons, eagles, squirrels, and so on. The members of a particular clan not only refrained from slaughtering their patrons and eating them as food, but also avoided mentioning them by name.

Associated with the clan cult was the worship of fire, which is still retained by the Yakuts. Fire, according to Yakut superstition, is the purest element and it was forbidden to defile or dishonor it. Before each meal was started, pieces of food were thrown into the fire; it was splashed with milk, kumys and so on. All this was considered a sacrifice to the master of the fire (Uot-ichchite). There was often not only a single master, but as many as seven brothers. No images were made of them. The cult of ancestors among the Yakuts was poorly developed. Among the deceased it was only the shamans and certain outstanding people whose memory was honored, and whose spirits, for some reason, were feared.

Folklore

The folklore of the Yakuts was somewhat one-sided, but in certain regions it reached a high artistic level. Apart from the wealth of varied and deeply poetic oral folklore, singing was far less developed and instrumental music hardly existed at all; dancing was fairly poorly developed and monotonous. In the realm of graphic art, the Yakuts only developed the applied forms—finishing and ornamentation of articles in everyday use.

A whole series of different genres and forms stand out among the oral creation of the Yakuts. One of the most interesting is the epic poem—the olonkho.

This is a very ancient type of folk poetry and originated in the clan-tribal age. The language of the olonkho is archaic, and contains a large number of obsolete, almost incomprehensible words and expressions, though it is at the same time rich, colorful and imaginative; the vocabulary of the epic contains almost twice as many words as the everyday language. Consequently, these works are difficult to translate into other languages. The olonkho describes the exploits of mythical warriors (bootur) and their struggles against the evil spirits, the abaasy. There are whole cycles of these poems built round the images